



COUNCIL

Wednesday, 21 October 2026

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

PART 1

6. QUESTIONS FROM THE YOUTH COUNCIL

In accordance with Standing Orders, a written answer to the following question will be circulated on a supplementary agenda:

What can the council do to increase opportunities for young people to access free or affordable local activities?

Pages 5 - 6

11. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS TO CHAIRS/PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

in accordance with Standing Orders, written answers to the following questions will be circulated on a supplementary agenda.

(A) Question from Councillor Sarah Mead

Following a request from a resident, please could floodlights be installed on the basketball court at Shephalbury Park to extend use in the winter months?

(B) Question from Councillor Phil Bibby

Given that the Government has announced a pause of Local Government Reform, in view of the wider legal challenges made based on, amongst other things, gerrymandering, how would the Leader of the Council respond to residents on SBC's proposals for the expensive option of 4 Unitaries, and how are these proposals likely to be amended?

(C) Question from Councillor Peter Wilkins

Can you tell me how many Solar panels and how many air source heat pumps were fitted to council tenanted homes in the financial year 2025/26 (where the smart export guarantee benefits the tenants directly rather than serving a communal area.) and what the target was for the year?

(D) Question from Councillor Ricki Rands

The Comet reported on 23 September 2026 that council mowing at Shackledell Grassland removed a substantial area of habitat and threatened a rare cricket colony.

The site supports six species of bush cricket, three species of grasshopper, as well as butterflies, moths and wildflowers.

The site is managed by Stevenage Borough Council under a Biodiversity Action Plan and is the only known location in Hertfordshire for the scarce great green bush cricket. It has been alleged that approximately 80% of the grassland was mown, despite the Plan recommending that only one quarter be cut each year, resulting in the loss of one of the colony's principal breeding areas.

A similar over-mowing incident occurred in 2018, which the Council described at the time as an "honest mistake".

Will the Council provide a full account of how this incident occurred?

(E) Question from Councillor John Blackwood

The Council committed to providing a new community centre as part of the development at Bragbury End. For clarity, the community room within Brodie Court does not constitute the promised new community centre.

Will the Council confirm whether it remains committed to delivering this facility?

(F) Question from Councillor Matthew Hurst

The Grade II-listed farmhouse at Fairlands Valley Park is in a poor state of repair and the Council has recently submitted a planning application to demolish outbuildings on the site.

Will the Council confirm unequivocally whether it intends to retain and preserve the farmhouse, or whether demolition is being considered?

(G) Question from Councillor Jaysica Marvell

Recent incidents have raised concerns about online abuse, harassment and intimidation directed at people involved in public life in Stevenage, including councillors, council staff and young people participating in the Council's Youth Advisory Board.

Can the Leader set out what procedures the Council currently has in place for responding to and escalating such incidents?

(H) Question from Councillor Ellie Plater

With the increased public presence of the newly established Youth Advisory Board, and with details of its work and the young people involved being shared online, can the Portfolio Holder outline what the Council is doing to support and safeguard young people who choose to participate in civic life, and what more can be done to ensure that young people feel confident putting themselves forward without fear of online abuse or personal attacks?

(I) Question from Councillor Jade Woods

Following the success of our International Day of Older Persons (IDOP) event, what plans do the Council have to build on this momentum and continue to support older residents throughout the year?

(J) Question from Councillor Andy McGuinness

What is the Council doing to support resident's access to key banking and postal services across our town?

(K) Question from Councillor Doug Bainbridge

Can the Portfolio holder for Housing confirm what specific work has been completed by Stevenage Borough council, outside of the armed forces covenant forum to prepare for the expanded armed forces covenant duty?

In particular which housing policies and procedures and operational practices have been reviewed against the draft statutory guidance.

(L) Question from Councillor Dermot Kehoe

Please can an update to Council be offered regarding the exploratory work on the electrification of larger fleet vehicles?

(M) Question from Councillor Robin Parker

Around the Borough there are a number of defibrillators and bleed control units. Please can consideration be given to making sure all of these are signposted with permanent arrows pointing to the nearest one?

(N) Question from Councillor Ashley-Wren

What plans do the Council have to improve their performance on addressing fly-tipping and support in dealing with the spate of seemingly abandoned vehicles across the Town?

(O) Question from Councillor Parris

The newly refurbished war memorial in the town centre looks fantastic, and I welcome the Council's support for the project. Can the Portfolio Holder outline what other funding and initiatives are in place to support veterans and the wider Armed Forces community in Stevenage?

(P) Question from Councillor Wren

Most supermarkets now offer a service for the recycling of soft plastics. Can the council consider introducing a soft plastics recycling collection at it's neighbour recycling banks and what impact does the council think this service could have to reduce landfill waste in Stevenage?

Pages 7 - 20

This page is intentionally left blank

Youth Advisory Board Question to Council

What can the council do to increase opportunities for young people to access free or affordable local activities

Answer (Councillor Coleen De Freitas):

The Council recognises the importance of ensuring that young people have access to a wide range of free and affordable activities that support their wellbeing, personal development, physical health and social connections.

We already work with a range of partners to provide opportunities throughout the year. For example, a free STEM-themed pantomime is planned for Christmas for disadvantaged families, and Stevenage Day continues to offer activities that young people can enjoy. More recently, external funding enabled us to deliver a successful Summertime Youth Day, and we continue to actively seek additional funding opportunities that would allow us to expand the range of activities available.

Alongside this, we are in ongoing discussions with the University of Hertfordshire and other partners to explore what further opportunities may be developed for young people in the future.

In addition, Everyone Active, through its Active Communities programme, provides a range of activities across its Stevenage sites for residents of all ages, including young people. These programmes vary according to local demand and participation levels, with some activities offered free of charge, some subsidised, and others available at a low cost. Young people and families can access information on these opportunities through the Herts Moving More Activity Finder, which brings together details of local physical activity sessions, including those delivered by Everyone Active.

However, feedback from young people suggests that awareness can be as significant a challenge as availability. While there are a number of free and low-cost activities already provided by community groups, sports clubs, voluntary organisations and public services across the town, many young people may not know what is currently available to them.

As a result, one practical area of focus is improving how we promote and signpost opportunities. Bringing together information on local activities in a single, accessible format could help young people and their families better understand what is already on offer and make it easier to participate.

We will also explore how the Youth Advisory Board can support this work. As a forum representing the voices of young people, the Board is well placed to advise on the most effective ways to communicate opportunities, identify gaps in provision and help shape future activities to ensure they reflect the interests and needs of young people in Stevenage.

By continuing to develop partnerships, secure external funding, support community providers and improve awareness of existing opportunities, we can help ensure that more young people are able to access affordable, inclusive and enriching activities across the borough.

COUNCIL – 21 OCTOBER 2026

MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

Questions to Portfolio Holders / Committee Chairs

(A) Question from Councillor Sarah Mead

Following a request from a resident, please could floodlights be installed on the basketball court at Shephalbury Park to extend use in the winter months?

Answer (Councillor Myla Arceno):

Officers are currently investigating this proposal to consider the feasibility, and I would be happy to update Members in due course

(B) Question from Councillor Phil Bibby

Given that the Government has announced a pause of Local Government Reform, in view of the wider legal challenges made based on, amongst other things, gerrymandering, how would the Leader of the Council respond to residents on SBC's proposals for the expensive option of 4 Unitaries, and how are these proposals likely to be amended?

Answer: (Councillor Richard Henry)

At this stage, there has been no change to the Government's decision. Work on Local Government Reorganisation relating to the four-unitary proposal is currently paused while the Secretary of State undertakes a review of the decision-making process. We remain ready to respond to any further direction from Government and continue to prepare for the next stages of the programme.

It would be inappropriate to speculate on the outcome of that review or on any potential amendments to proposals when no further information has been provided by Government. Any future decisions will ultimately rest with Ministers, and the Council will carefully consider and respond to any new guidance or requirements as they emerge.

In the meantime, our focus remains firmly on delivering for Stevenage residents. That includes building more council homes, progressing the new Sports and Leisure Centre, investing in our neighbourhoods and green spaces, supporting local communities and driving forward the regeneration of our town.

While we await the outcome of the review, it is important that councils across Hertfordshire continue to work together on devolution. Securing a strategic authority and elected Mayor for Hertfordshire would create opportunities to attract significant additional investment, strengthen local decision-making and support economic growth and public services across the county.

(C) Question from Councillor Peter Wilkins

Can you tell me how many Solar panels and how many air source heat pumps were fitted to council tenanted homes in the financial year 2025/26 (where the smart export guarantee benefits the tenants directly rather than serving a communal area.) and what the target was for the year?

Answer (Councillor Loraine Rossati):

The Council's objective is that all newly built council homes are designed to benefit from low-carbon technologies, including air source heat pumps and solar PV panels, helping to reduce tenants' energy costs and improve environmental performance. During 2025/26, air source heat pumps and solar photovoltaic (PV) panels were installed as part of the Council's new build programme. This included:

- 15 homes with individual PV panels and EV charging points, at the Fairlands Gate Development.
- 27 homes with air source heat pumps, at the development in Dunn Close
- A further 88 homes at Brodie Court benefiting from a communal heating system supported by a combination of PV panels and heat pump technology, providing direct benefits to residents rather than serving communal areas alone.

Ensuring that all Council-owned homes have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of at least C and meet the new Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES) by 2030 (which forms part of the revised Decent Homes Standard) is a priority. Funding has been allocated within the HRA Business Plan for measures to achieve this, on the assumption that Government funding will be made available beyond the allocations received to date, including £3.8m from the Warm Homes – Social Housing Fund (which will help retrofit 379 homes over the three year period up to March 2028).

The Council has c.2,600 homes which currently have an EPC rating of below C. There is a range of retrofit measures that can be undertaken to achieve a minimum EPC rating of C and these have been collated for existing homes based on a programme of EPCs that have been/are being undertaken alongside stock condition surveys.

Typically, insulation measures are considered a priority, as ensuring properties are well insulated makes them more energy efficient and ready for low carbon heating technologies such as air source heat pumps (ASHPs) to be installed in the future. Note that ASHPs are not effective and can cost more to run if installed in poorly insulated homes. Therefore, the Council is not planning to install ASHPs in significant numbers of Council-owned homes at this time. However, SBC has taken the opportunity to secure funding for a small number of homes to be fitted with ASHPs as part of the Warm Homes funding, as this allowed for 100% of the costs of ASHPs to be met for up to 10% of the homes, which in turn meant no match funding from the Council was required for that element of the bid.

Monitoring the impact of the ASHP installations will help in assessing the suitability of this form of low carbon technology for wider rollout as part of decarbonisation plans beyond the EPC rating of C programme. As always, this will be subject to affordability, as funding for this is not currently factored into the HRA Business Plan.

Looking ahead, the Council has secured £3.8m funding through the Social Housing Fund (Wave 3) programme, which includes installation of solar PV panels and air source heat pumps in 35 existing Council homes during 2026/27 and 2027/28. In addition, around 100 further properties are expected to benefit from solar PV installations without a heat pump. The homes selected will be street properties (as opposed to flat blocks) with a current EPC rating of below C and where, based on EPC assessments, these properties would require solar panels to achieve that rating (or higher) as other measures (such as insulation) alone would not achieve that standard.

Although the Council will retain ownership of the solar PV systems and therefore claim any eligible Smart Export Guarantee payments, tenants will benefit directly from the electricity generated, reducing household energy costs and improving the energy efficiency of their homes. While this is not a requirement of the funding conditions, as the Council retains ownership of the installations and is responsible for their ongoing management and maintenance, it is considered appropriate to retain any associated export income where possible. This income will help offset expenditure within the HRA, thereby supporting future investment in the stock. It also avoids the administrative complications of individual tenants holding export agreements, which would need to be managed and potentially transferred or closed when tenancies change. Otherwise, tenants could move out of a property but continue to receive export payments linked to an installation at an address in which they no longer live.

In addition to the Warm Homes investment, the Council is investing £20m over the three year period (to 2028) in replacement heating, windows and doors programmes, which will also contribute to warmer and more energy efficient homes.

(D) Question from Councillor Ricki Rands

The Comet reported on 23 September 2026 that council mowing at Shackledell Grassland removed a substantial area of habitat and threatened a rare cricket colony.

The site supports six species of bush cricket, three species of grasshopper, as well as butterflies, moths and wildflowers.

The site is managed by Stevenage Borough Council under a Biodiversity Action Plan and is the only known location in Hertfordshire for the scarce great green bush cricket. It has been alleged that approximately 80% of the grassland was mown, despite the Plan recommending that only one quarter be cut each year, resulting in the loss of one of the colony's principal breeding areas.

A similar over-mowing incident occurred in 2018, which the Council described at the time as an “honest mistake”.

Will the Council provide a full account of how this incident occurred?

Answer (Councillor Rob Broom):

The extent of the recent management works has, in some cases, been overstated, and there is no evidence to suggest that the works have had a detrimental impact on the Great Green Bush Cricket colony. While the species is not nationally rare, this site is understood to be the only known location for it in Hertfordshire.

This year's scrub management was significantly less extensive than in 2018, with a substantial area of scrub habitat remaining. All works were undertaken under the supervision of the Council's Ecologist as part of an established management regime, which includes the rotational management of approximately one-third of the scrub each year. This approach is essential to prevent scrub encroachment and maintain the diverse mosaic of habitats that support a wide range of wildlife.

The Council works closely with Green Space Volunteers and receives advice from the Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust to help ensure the site is managed appropriately for biodiversity.

We take concerns about local biodiversity seriously, and our Ecologist is engaging positively with the person who raised these concerns to explore whether any adjustments to the management approach could further support the Great Green Bush Cricket population, in the context of the overall practical management of the area.

(E) Question from Councillor John Blackwood

The Council committed to providing a new community centre as part of the development at Bragbury End. For clarity, the community room within Brodie Court does not constitute the promised new community centre.

Will the Council confirm whether it remains committed to delivering this facility?

Answer (Councillor Tom Plater):

The Council remains committed to delivering a new community centre at Bragbury End and recognises the importance of this facility to both existing and future residents.

The community room within Brodie Court was provided to support residents of the extra care scheme and other local groups and was never intended to replace the commitment to a wider community centre serving the Bragbury End neighbourhood.

As part of the ongoing development of the area, the Council continues to consider the most appropriate arrangements, scope and delivery model for a new community facility. The Council remains committed to bringing forward proposals and will keep residents and ward Members informed as plans progress

(F) Question from Councillor Matthew Hurst

The Grade II-listed farmhouse at Fairlands Valley Park is in a poor state of repair and the Council has recently submitted a planning application to demolish outbuildings on the site.

Will the Council confirm unequivocally whether it intends to retain and preserve the farmhouse, or whether demolition is being considered?

Answer (Councillor Tom Plater):

The planning application referred to relates to a separate outbuilding within the farmhouse grounds which was severely damaged by a fire on 3rd May 2026. Following attendance by Hertfordshire Fire & Rescue Service, the outbuilding was identified as structurally unsafe and the site was secured while the Council obtained appropriate structural, planning and heritage advice. Given the extent of the damage and the associated risk to the public, demolition is considered the most appropriate course of action

However, in terms of the farmhouse itself the Members will be acutely aware of the significant financial constraints the Council was under since 2010/11 and with that restricted capital resources and very limited capital funding. Over the years the Council has considered a number of options for the farmhouse and the house was also registered as an Asset of Community Value with two community bids but unfortunately neither could demonstrate the ability to raise the level of funding required to invest in the building (circa £1.9Million in 2018). Subsequent to that time the Council has again considered a number of options but has not had the necessary monies to invest in the building and revenue funding for its day to day running. Council officers are currently identifying if there are any grant funding opportunities that support the cost of the works or whether there could be a third party leisure use.

(G) Question from Councillor Jaysica Marvell

Recent incidents have raised concerns about online abuse, harassment and intimidation directed at people involved in public life in Stevenage, including councillors, council staff and young people participating in the Council's Youth Advisory Board.

Can the Leader set out what procedures the Council currently has in place for responding to and escalating such incidents?

Answer (Councillor Nazmin Chowdhury):

The Council takes incidents of online abuse, harassment and intimidation very seriously. It is important that councillors, Council employees and young people participating in the Youth Advisory Board understand how to report concerns, who is responsible for responding, and what support is available. Concerns involving councillors should be raised through the appropriate Member support and reporting channels, while incidents affecting Council employees should be managed through the relevant internal procedures. Where young people are involved, safeguarding procedures must be followed. Any threats, suspected criminal offences or immediate risks to safety should be reported to the police as appropriate and the Council's safeguarding team soon be informed.

The Council recognises that harassment and intimidation can have a significant and lasting impact on individuals' wellbeing, confidence and ability to participate fully in public and community life. Such behaviour should never be accepted as an inevitable consequence of public service, employment with the Council or participation in civic activities.

The Council is committed to ensuring that all incidents are taken seriously, appropriately recorded, investigated where necessary, and escalated through the proper channels. Equally important is ensuring that those affected are provided with appropriate support and guidance, and that a culture of respect, safety and inclusion is maintained across all aspects of Council activity

(H) Question from Councillor Ellie Plater

With the increased public presence of the newly established Youth Advisory Board, and with details of its work and the young people involved being shared online, can the Portfolio Holder outline what the Council is doing to support and safeguard young people who choose to participate in civic life, and what more can be done to ensure that young people feel confident putting themselves forward without fear of online abuse or personal attacks?

Answer (Councillor Coleen De Freitas):

The Council takes online abuse, harassment and intimidation very seriously. We want young people to feel confident in participating in civic life and contributing their views through initiatives such as the Youth Advisory Board, without fear of abuse, personal attacks or intimidation.

The Council has robust safeguarding arrangements in place to support young people who engage in our activities. Officers working with the Youth Advisory Board provide appropriate guidance and support, and any concerns relating to the welfare of a young person are managed in accordance with the Council's safeguarding procedures. Where necessary, concerns are escalated to the Council's safeguarding team and, where criminal behaviour, threats or immediate risks to safety are identified, matters will be referred to the police.

More widely, the Council is committed to promoting a culture of respect and positive engagement, both online and in person. Harassment, intimidation and

abusive behaviour have no place in public life and should never be seen as an inevitable consequence of taking part in community or democratic activities.

We recognise that online abuse can have a significant and lasting impact on wellbeing, confidence and participation. That is why it is important that incidents are reported, taken seriously, properly recorded and acted upon where appropriate, and that those affected receive the support they need.

As the Youth Advisory Board develops, we will continue to review the support available to young people, work closely with relevant safeguarding professionals, and ensure that appropriate measures are in place so that young people can make their voices heard in a safe, supportive and respectful environment.

(I) Question from Councillor Jade Woods

Following the success of our International Day of Older Persons (IDOP) event, what plans do the Council have to build on this momentum and continue to support older residents throughout the year?

Answer (Councillor Myla Arceno):

Following the success of this years' International Day of Older Persons, we remain committed to ensuring Stevenage is a town where older residents feel valued, supported and able to live healthy, independent lives.

In October 2025, the Council passed a motion reaffirming its commitment to being an Age and Dementia Friendly Community. Since then, officers and external partners have developed an action plan to turn this commitment into practical action.

Our International Day of Older Persons event is a key part of this work and continues to grow, with this year's programme featuring over 40 organisations and stalls, intergenerational activities with Woolenwick School and physical activity sessions delivered by Everyone Active. Beyond this event, we have introduced mandatory age and dementia awareness training for taxi drivers, supported the Hertfordshire Dementia Festival and charity ball, and continued our popular weekly Dementia Café.

Working with Age UK Hertfordshire and Herts Sports & Physical Activity Partnership, through the Public Health funded Age Friendly: Live Better programme, we have engaged with older residents to understand their experiences. Feedback highlighted positive access to green spaces and community facilities, alongside opportunities to improve public toilets, seating and safety. This has informed the recently launched pilot initiative Community Toilet Scheme and we have begun walking audits to explore how we can improve accessibility.

The Council also continues to deliver Independent Living, Extra Care, Community Support and Care Connect 24/7 services, helping residents remain safe and independent. Alongside this, Stevenage FC Foundation and Everyone

Active provide strength and balance and seated exercise classes to help older residents stay active, maintain mobility and reduce the risk of falls.

Supporting social connections is equally important. We work closely with organisations including the Irish Network Stevenage, Caring Herts, Age Concern, the Life After 60 Club, Alzheimer's Society and Hertfordshire Memory Support Service to connect residents with community activities, provide personalised signposting and support organisations to promote their activities and secure funding. This helps reduce loneliness, build friendships and improve wellbeing.

This work is reinforced by our refreshed Healthy Stevenage Strategy, which identifies Ageing Well, Frailty Prevention and Dementia Support as a key priority, alongside the Central East Integrated Care Board's focus on frailty and early intervention.

Whilst the Council does significant work to support older people, it is also important to recognise that they also give back to our community, making up a large proportion of our volunteer networks, including for example green space volunteers.

Ultimately, our ambition is to embed Age and Dementia Friendly Stevenage into everything we do, ensuring our work continues throughout the year and makes a lasting difference to older residents' lives.

(J) Question from Councillor Andy McGuinness

What is the Council doing to support resident's access to key banking and postal services across our town?

Answer (Councillor Coleen De Freitas):

The Council recognises that convenient access to banking and postal services is essential for many residents, businesses and community groups across Stevenage.

Whilst the Council does not directly provide these services, we work with service providers, local partners and community stakeholders to help ensure residents can continue to access vital face-to-face banking and postal facilities. In particular, we support efforts to maintain a vibrant and accessible town centre and neighbourhood centres where essential services can thrive.

Where changes to banking or postal provision are proposed, the Council engages with providers to understand the potential impact on residents and businesses and to ensure local concerns are communicated. We also work with partners to promote awareness of alternative provision where this is available, including shared banking facilities and digital support services.

More broadly, the Council is committed to reducing barriers to access by supporting good transport links, investing in our town centres and community

facilities, and ensuring that the needs of older and more vulnerable residents are considered when essential services are reviewed.

We recognise that many people still value and rely upon in-person banking and postal services, and the Council will continue to champion the interests of Stevenage residents by engaging constructively with providers and advocating for accessible services across the town.

(K) Question from Councillor Doug Bainbridge

Can the Portfolio holder for Housing confirm what specific work has been completed by Stevenage Borough council, outside of the armed forces covenant forum to prepare for the expanded armed forces covenant duty?

In particular which housing policies and procedures and operational practices have been reviewed against the draft statutory guidance.

Answer (Councillor Loraine Rossati):

In preparation for the expanded Armed Forces Covenant Duty, the Council has reviewed key housing policies, procedures and operational practices to ensure that the needs of serving personnel, veterans and their families are appropriately recognised and supported.

This work has included reviewing the Housing Allocations Policy, which already provides exemptions from local connection requirements for certain members of the Armed Forces community and awards additional housing priority where statutory criteria are met.

The Council has also reviewed its homelessness assessment processes and procedures to ensure that officers give proper consideration to the specific circumstances and potential vulnerabilities of current and former service personnel, in line with housing legislation, the Homelessness Code of Guidance and the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant.

In addition, the recently adopted new Tenancy Strategy 2026-2031 explicitly encourages registered providers and housing services to recognise and support the Armed Forces Covenant and its objectives.

Alongside these policy and procedural reviews, the Housing Options Service has developed specialist expertise through a dedicated Housing Options Caseworker with previous Armed Forces experience. The officer leads on cases involving serving personnel and veterans, works closely with relevant partner organisations and attends the Armed Forces Covenant Forum to help ensure that support is informed by an understanding of the specific challenges faced by the Armed Forces community.

Together, these measures mean that many of the principles underpinning the draft statutory guidance are already reflected within the Council's housing policies, operational procedures and day-to-day service delivery, providing a strong foundation for implementation of the expanded Covenant Duty.

(L) Question from Councillor Dermot Kehoe

Please can an update to Council be offered regarding the exploratory work on the electrification of larger fleet vehicles?

Answer (Councillor Rob Broom):

An order has been placed for our first electric refuse collection vehicle. This innovative project will see one of our existing end-of-life combustion engine vehicle fully refurbished and converted to operate on electric power, extending its working life while significantly reducing emissions.

The vehicle is expected to enter service by April 2027 and represents an important step in our journey towards a more sustainable fleet.

(M) Question from Councillor Robin Parker

Around the Borough there are a number of defibrillators and bleed control units. Please can consideration be given to making sure all of these are signposted with permanent arrows pointing to the nearest one?

Answer (Councillor Nazmin Chowdhury):

Ensuring that residents can locate these facilities quickly and easily is an important part of making our communities safer. I welcome any consideration being given to how these facilities are signposted across the Borough, including the use of clear, permanent directional arrows where appropriate. This would help residents and visitors identify the nearest available equipment, particularly in unfamiliar locations or stressful situations.

I would suggest that the Council review the locations of existing defibrillators and bleed control units, working with relevant partners and those responsible for their maintenance, to identify where additional signage would be most beneficial. This review should also consider the visibility of existing signs, accessibility, maintenance responsibilities and the associated costs.

We should also ensure that the locations of these facilities are accurately recorded and readily available through appropriate directories and mapping services.

The aim should be to make emergency equipment as easy to find as possible, so that residents feel better equipped to respond when someone needs urgent help.

(N) Question from Councillor Ashley-Wren

What plans do the Council have to improve their performance on addressing fly-tipping and support in dealing with the spate of seemingly abandoned vehicles across the Town?

Answer (Councillor Rob Broom):

The Council recognises that both fly-tipping and abandoned vehicles have a significant impact on residents' quality of life, the appearance of neighbourhoods, and public confidence in local services. Improving performance in these areas remains a priority.

To address fly-tipping, the Council has established a Fly-Tipping Taskforce and action plan, which has been well received by the Environment and Economy (E&E) Scrutiny Committee. This provides a coordinated approach to tackling the issue, with a focus on:

- Strengthening enforcement activity, including investigating offences, issuing Fixed Penalty Notices where appropriate, and pursuing prosecutions in the most serious cases.
- Improving reporting mechanisms to make it easier for residents to notify the Council of incidents.
- Working with residents, housing providers, community groups, and partner agencies to identify hotspots and prevent repeat offences.
- Using intelligence and data to target resources more effectively in areas experiencing persistent problems.
- Promoting education and awareness campaigns to encourage responsible waste disposal and highlight residents' legal duty to ensure their waste is disposed of correctly.

In relation to abandoned and nuisance vehicles, the Council is:

- Reviewing reports more quickly and improving coordination between relevant teams and external agencies.
- Taking prompt action where vehicles meet the legal criteria for abandonment.
- Working closely with the Police, DVLA, and landowners where responsibility for action sits with another organisation.
- Using intelligence-led approaches to identify locations that experience recurring issues and exploring preventative measures where appropriate.

The Council acknowledges residents' concerns regarding the recent increase in reports and is committed to continuing to review its processes, invest resources where possible, and work with partners to improve response times and outcomes. Residents can support this work by reporting incidents promptly and providing as much information as possible, including photographs, locations, and vehicle details where appropriate.

The Council is also currently reviewing the need for an Environmental Crime Officer. This role would support both enforcement and clearance activity relating to fly-tipping, graffiti, and abandoned and nuisance vehicles.

Ultimately, our aim is to keep Stevenage clean, safe, and well-maintained, while ensuring our enforcement and environmental services are used as effectively as possible.

(O) Question from Councillor Parris

The newly refurbished war memorial in the town centre looks fantastic, and I welcome the Council's support for the project. Can the Portfolio Holder outline what other funding and initiatives are in place to support veterans and the wider Armed Forces community in Stevenage?

Answer (Councillor Tom Plater):

Thank you, and I agree that the refurbished War Memorial looks fantastic. It is an important part of recognising the service and sacrifice of our Armed Forces community, but our commitment in Stevenage goes much further than remembrance.

The Council continues to support a range of local initiatives through funding, practical assistance and partnership working, helping veterans and the wider Armed Forces community to access support, build connections and take part in community activities.

This includes providing funding and support for local veterans' groups and breakfast clubs, helping to create welcoming spaces where former service personnel can come together, share experiences and access support. We have also supported commemorative projects, Armed Forces Day celebrations and remembrance activities, recognising the important contribution our Armed Forces community makes to Stevenage.

The Council has appointed a dedicated, fixed-term Armed Forces Covenant and VALOUR Programme Officer, who is themselves a veteran with 32 years of service in the Armed Forces. This has strengthened our engagement with veterans, local organisations and partners across Hertfordshire.

We have also established the Stevenage Armed Forces Covenant Forum, bringing together statutory services, Armed Forces charities, veterans' organisations and community partners. The Forum is developing a shared action plan focused on improving access to services, strengthening local support networks and addressing the issues that matter most to our Armed Forces community.

Alongside this, we have submitted an application for £732,000 over three years through the national VALOUR programme. If successful, this would establish the VALOUR Anchor Point based at Stevenage Arts and Leisure Centre. Stevenage would provide the central hub and coordination point, with regular outreach and partner-led support across Stevenage, North Hertfordshire, Welwyn Hatfield, East Hertfordshire and Broxbourne. This would help veterans and the wider Armed Forces community access joined-up support with health, housing, employment, welfare and wellbeing.

The refurbishment of the War Memorial is a very visible recognition of our Armed Forces community, but equally important is the work taking place throughout the year to provide practical support, strengthen local partnerships and ensure veterans and their families can access the services they need.

(P) Question from Councillor Wren

Most supermarkets now offer a service for the recycling of soft plastics. Can the council consider introducing a soft plastics recycling collection at its neighbour recycling banks and what impact does the council think this service could have to reduce landfill waste in Stevenage?

Answer (Councillor Rob Broom):

The Government's plans for introducing kerbside collections of flexible plastics have been delayed from 2027 to 2030. Officers will continue to monitor developments closely and assess any further changes to the national timetable. At present, the plan is to introduce a kerbside flexible plastics collection service from April 2030 in line with the revised timescales.

In the meantime, early discussions are under way to review the bring bank network and ensure it continues to meet residents' needs. As part of this review, we will consider whether the introduction of flexible plastics collections at bring bank locations would be beneficial and how this aligns with future kerbside collection arrangements.

Analysis of our kerbside waste, completed in February 2026, identified an average of 0.45kg of plastic film per household within the residual waste stream. While this represents a relatively small proportion of the overall waste generated, any material that can be diverted from the residual stream and recycled delivers an environmental benefit and supports higher recycling performance.

It is also important to note that none of Stevenage's residual waste is sent to landfill. All residual waste collected by the Council is processed at Energy from Waste (EfW) facilities, where it is used to generate electricity and heat.

This page is intentionally left blank